



## Notable Facts

Did you know?

1. There are 5.3 million US Jews – 2.2 per cent of the population.
2. Levi Strauss, an immigrant from Germany, invented his blue jeans in 1873.
3. Scientist Jonas Salk discovered the polio vaccine in 1955.
4. At least 16 Jewish soldiers have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. This is the highest military decoration an American service member can receive for outstanding heroism and bravery in battle.
5. Judith Resnick was the first Jewish astronaut in space. She died in the Challenger shuttle disaster in 1986.
6. The words "...give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses..." on the Statue of Liberty were written by a Jewish woman, Emma Lazarus.
7. There are no Jewish Republicans in the Senate or the House. The Democrats have 22 Congress members and 11 Senators.
8. Yip Harburg, born to Yiddish speaking Orthodox Jews and an American popular song lyricist, worked with many well-known composers and wrote the lyrics to the Oscar-winning song, "Over the Rainbow."

<http://www.thejc.com/news/world-news/120283/40-facts-you-didnt-know-about-american-jews>  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/cmohtoc.html>  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/cmohtoc.html>

# May 2015

## Jewish American Heritage

The American Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1892 in the wake of the 400th anniversary celebration of Christopher Columbus' voyage to America. Its founding marked the beginning of the serious study of American Jewish history, although not the academic study of the American Jewish experience.

The academic study of American Jewish History can be dated to the career of Jacob Rader Marcus, who founded the American Jewish Archives in 1947 to provide a central location for the documentary evidence of North American Jewry.

Marcus also served as President of the American Jewish Historical Society from 1955 to 1958. As part of the American Jewish Tercentenary, Marcus sought to define the parameters of American Jewish history, and as part of an address to the American Jewish Historical Society in 1958, Marcus defined, from an academic standpoint, the four major periods of American Jewish history:

- The Age of the Rise and Decline of Sephardic Jewry, 1654 – 1840.
- The Age of the Rise and Dominance of the German Jew and the Challenge to his Leadership, 1841 – 1920.
- The Age of the Advent and Rise of the Eastern European Jew and His Bid for Hegemony, 1852-1920.
- The American period, 1920-.

Most recently, Jonathan Sarna, the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University, has moved away from the tradition of specifying periods of American Jewish history towards defining overarching themes that characterize the American Jewish experience.

Sarna views the American Jewish experience as ripe with potential and fraught with difficulties. He outlines four broad characteristics and five ongoing challenges that he considers "critical to any serious effort at understanding what American Jewish life in America, especially since the Revolution, has been all about."

<http://350th.org/history/historiography.html>

